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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 6053  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4384  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2015  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4376  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3471  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8478  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5938  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0642  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2756  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000462

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)  
SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: KARUNA RELEASED FROM UK PRISON; MAY BE  
DEPORTED

REF: A. COLOMBO 409

- [1](#)B. 07 COLOMBO 1657
- [1](#)C. 07 COLOMBO 1526
- [1](#)D. 07 COLOMBO 1408

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Former LTTE-breakaway faction leader Karuna was released from prison on May 8 after serving half of his prison sentence for entering the United Kingdom on a false diplomatic passport, likely supplied by the Sri Lankan government (ref B). Karuna is currently being held in an immigration detention center. International human rights groups have expressed disappointment with the UK's decision not to prosecute him for war crimes. The British High Commission in Colombo issued a statement on May 9 stating that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute Karuna in the UK for any additional criminal offenses. Embassy contacts report that the UK was unable to pursue charges against Karuna because many witnesses were afraid to come forward and because the GSL did not allow UK investigators to travel to Sri Lanka to interview witnesses. Karuna's return to Sri Lanka would be a significant complication for the GSL, which teamed up with his successor, Pillaiyan, to contest the May 10 Eastern Provincial Council elections. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Former LTTE-breakaway faction leader Karuna, true name Vinayagmoorthy Muralitharan, was released from prison on May 8 after serving half of a 9 month sentence for entering the United Kingdom on a false diplomatic passport, likely supplied by the Sri Lankan government (ref a). Deputy British High Commissioner Lesley Craig confirmed to DCM on May 12 that Karuna was released from prison and is currently at an immigration detention center. He is expected to depart the UK this week or next, but Craig said it is still to be determined whether he would depart voluntarily or be deported. There is no chance that Karuna will be granted asylum in the UK, she said. She anticipates he will return to Sri Lanka since few countries would be willing to take him in.

[1](#)3. (C) International human rights groups, including Amnesty

International and Human Rights Watch, have expressed disappointment with the UK government's decision not to prosecute Karuna for international war crimes. The British High Commission in Colombo issued a statement on May 9 saying, "We are deeply concerned that Karuna and his faction have allegedly been responsible for murder and abductions and are still believed to be involved in intimidation and child recruitment. The Crown Prosecution Service has advised the Metropolitan Police Service that there is insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction for any criminal offenses in the UK." Craig told DCM that witnesses in Sri Lanka were not prepared to come forward to testify for fear of threats and intimidation against themselves and their families.

14. (S/NF) David Savage, the U.S.-funded witness protection expert who has been working with the International Independent Group of Eminent persons (IIGEP), also reported that the Crown Prosecution Service could not prosecute Karuna because of a lack of witnesses. Sri Lankans, even those living abroad, who could give evidence as to Karuna's involvement in crimes against humanity, are terrified of possible reprisals, he said. The Crown Prosecutors made a request to the GSL for UK investigators to travel to Sri Lanka to depose potential witnesses, but the GSL demurred, saying the Sri Lanka Attorney General would take on this task if the UK would provide the names of the witnesses. The UK prosecutors declined to take the GSL up on this offer. Savage said that he had been involved in discussions with Scotland Yard about the possibility of him interviewing witnesses on its behalf, but with the GSL's refusal to extend

COLOMBO 00000462 002 OF 002

visa for IIGEP staff beyond May 14 (ref A), this became impractical.

15. (C) COMMENT: The return of Karuna to Sri Lanka would be a significant complication for the GSL, which teamed up with Karuna's successor, Pillaiyan, to contest the May 10 Eastern Provincial Council elections. Pillaiyan is now a leading candidate for the position of Chief Minister in Eastern Province. It is unclear what would happen to Karuna upon his return. He does not currently face any criminal charges in Sri Lanka, but he may not be safe if Pillaiyan feels threatened by his return.

BLAKE